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Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00
L-03 FRB-03 OMB-01 ITC-01 SP-02 USIA-06 AGRE-00
AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 INR-07 IO-13 LAB-04
NSAE-00 OIC-02 SIL-01 STR-07 TRSE-00 CEA-01 SS-15
DOE-11 SOE-02 /145 W
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P 011458Z FEB 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5376
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: UNCTAD
SUBJECT: THIRD PREPARATORY MEETING ON TROPICAL TIMBER,
JANUARY 23-27, 1978

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REF: GENEVA 1503 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THIRD PREPARATORY MEETING ON TROPICAL TIMBER ADOPTED A TRIMMED-DOWN VERSION OF THE WORK PROGRAM OF STUDIES PREPARED BY THE OCTOBER EXPERTS LEVEL MEETING. UNLIKE PREVIOUS PREPARATORIES, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS CONGENIAL AND AGREEMENT WAS QUICKLY AND EASILY REACHED ON A COMPROMISE TEXT. FINAL OUTCOME OF UNCTAD TROPICAL TIMBER EXERCISE REMAINS UNCERTAIN AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THIRD PREPARATORY MEETING, HELD JANUARY 23-27, 1978, ADOPTED A MORE PRAGMATIC VERSION OF THE WORK PROGRAM OF STUDIES RECOMMENDED BY EXPERTS AT THE SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING. BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF STUDIES AND INTEGRATING RELATING TOPICS, THE NEW TEXT REDUCES THE TASK OF THE UNCTAD AND FAO SECRETARIATS TO MANAGEABLE PROPORTIONS. SINCE THE STUDIES CALLED FOR WILL REQUIRE AT LEAST 4 TO 6 MONTHS TO PREPARE, IT WAS AGREED THAT UNCTAD SECRETARIAT WILL CONSULT WITH INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS IN 6 WEEKS TIME TO ASCERTAIN PROGRESS IT HAS MADE AND SUGGEST REALISTIC DATE FOR FOURTH PREPARATORY. WITH THE RESULTANT STUDIES BEFORE IT, THAT MEETING WILL DEVELOP SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. TEXT OF ADOPTED WORK PROGRAM IS CONTAINED IN SEPTEL.

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2. IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS MEETINGS, THE THIRD PREPARATORY WAS REMARKABLY DEVOID OF CONTENTION. MINOR DIFFERENCES WERE AMICABLY RESOLVED, AND CONTACT GROUPS PROVED UNNECESSARY. ONLY SUBSTANTIVE DISCOURSE DURING MEETING WAS INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER STATEMENTS ON THE PRODUCERS PAPER CONCERNING POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL ACTION THAT HAD BEEN TABLED AT THE LAST MEETING. A WIDE RANGE OF CONSUMER VIEWS EMERGED ON PRICE INSTABILITY, WITH THE NORDICS NOTING IT HAD BECOME MORE MARKED, THE EC QUESTIONING ITS EXISTENCE, AND THE US ACKNOWLEDGING EXISTENCE BUT DOUBTING ANY NEED FOR ACTION. CONSUMERS WERE UNANIMOUS ON SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES: STOCKING (TOTALLY INFEASIBLE), MARKET ACCESS (MORE APPROPRIATE TO MTN), AND DISCUSSION OF FINANCING (PREMATURE AT THIS TIME). WHEN PRODUCERS CAUCUSSED TO DIGEST THESE STATEMENTS, CONSUMERS WITH HELP OF FAO TIMBER EXPERT (ALF LESLIE) BEGAN FORMULATING NEW DRAFT WORK PROGRAM THAT SOON EVOLVED INTO THE COMPROMISE TEXT.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER BUREAU (ITTB) QUESTION WAS NOT FORMALLY RAISED DURING THIS MEETING. THAI PERMREP INDICATED (IN PRIVATE) THAT RECENT DECISION TO EXCLUDE CONSUMERS FROM EVEN ASSOCIATE STATUS STEMMED

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LARGELY FROM THE INTRANSIGENCE OF THE PARTICULAR EXPERTS FROM CAPITALS, AND 2) THE PROPOSED BODY'S STRUCTURE REMAINS FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO POSSIBLE CHANGE. THE JAPANESE, WHILE ESPOUSING VIRTUALLY ALL THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ITTB, PARTICULARLY INFORMATION COLLECTION, SAID THEY REMAIN FIRMLY OPPOSED TO ANY BODY FROM WHICH THEY WOULD BE EXCLUDED.

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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00
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4. COMMENT: THE FINAL OUTCOME ON THIS COMMODITY IS DIFFICULT TO DISCERN. THERE IS A STRONG DIVERGENCY OF VIEWS WITHIN THE PRODUCER CAMP, WHICH WAS NOT REFLECTED IN THE ADOPTION OF THE WORK PROGRAM BUT WHICH WILL BE HARD TO PAPER OVER AT THE FOURTH PREPARATORY. THE ASIANS ARE LARGELY SATISFIED WITH PRESENT MARKET CONDITIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS, BUT ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED OVER RAPID RESOURCE DEPLETION. THEY SEEK AN INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT THAT WOULD HAVE LAG PRICES REFLECT REGENERATION COSTS. (FYI: MALAYSIANS INDICATED PRIVATELY THAT 1) THEY ENVISION AN UNCTAD-GENERATED INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT AS A MEANS OF OVERCOMING DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING THE WORLD MARKET, 2) CONTINUE TO BE DISTURBED BY THE VULNERABILITY STEMMING FROM THEIR HEAVY RELIANCE ON JAPANESE MARKETS FOR WHICH THEY ARE COMPETING WITH THE INDONESIANS, 3) ATTRIBUTE MUCH OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR FOREIGN SALES TO NEW MIDDLE EAST MARKETS WHICH READILY ACCEPT SUBSTANDARD PRODUCTS). THE AFRICANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO EXPAND THEIR MARKETS AND PRODUCTION AS RAPIDLY AS THE ASIANS. AS A RESULT, THEY CLING TO THE INCREASED MARKET INSTABILITY ARGUMENT AND CONTINUE TO INSIST UPON AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT WOULD ASSURE AUGMENTED PRICES AND EARNINGS. FURTHER OBSCURING THE SCENE IS THE EXTREMELY LOW PROFILE SO FAR ADOPTED--PARTLY BECAUSE OF LANGUAGE PROBLEMS--BY THE JAPANESE, WHO ARE THE WORLD'S LARGEST CONSUMER AND ACCOUNT FOR OVER HALF OF WORLD IMPORTS OF TROPICAL TIMBER. END COMMENT. VANDEN HEUVEL

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